Dynamic System Management

2019 Federal Permanent Housing Conference

In this Deep Dive Institute we will:

1. Review the essential purpose of coordinated entry
2. Review the four elements: *Access, Assessment, Prioritization* and *Referral,* and identify common challenges communities face in each of the four elements
3. Describe **Dynamic System Management** as an effective strategy to address common CE challenges

What is Dynamic System Management?

Dynamic System Management continually adjusts a CoCs prioritization list to achieve all of the following system objectives:

1. Most vulnerable persons are prioritized
2. Housing placements occur within 60 days or as quickly as possible
3. All available CoC resources are leveraged in most flexible manner possible
4. CoC is working towards continuous improvement of system improvement measures

This Deep Dive Institute will further explore what ***dynamic system management*** looks like in practical terms and how to do it.

An effective **Coordinated Entry** approach:
- ✓ Ensures housing program openings are filled by the people who need them the most; and
- ✓ Implements strategies to serve the larger population that cannot immediately be assisted with available resource

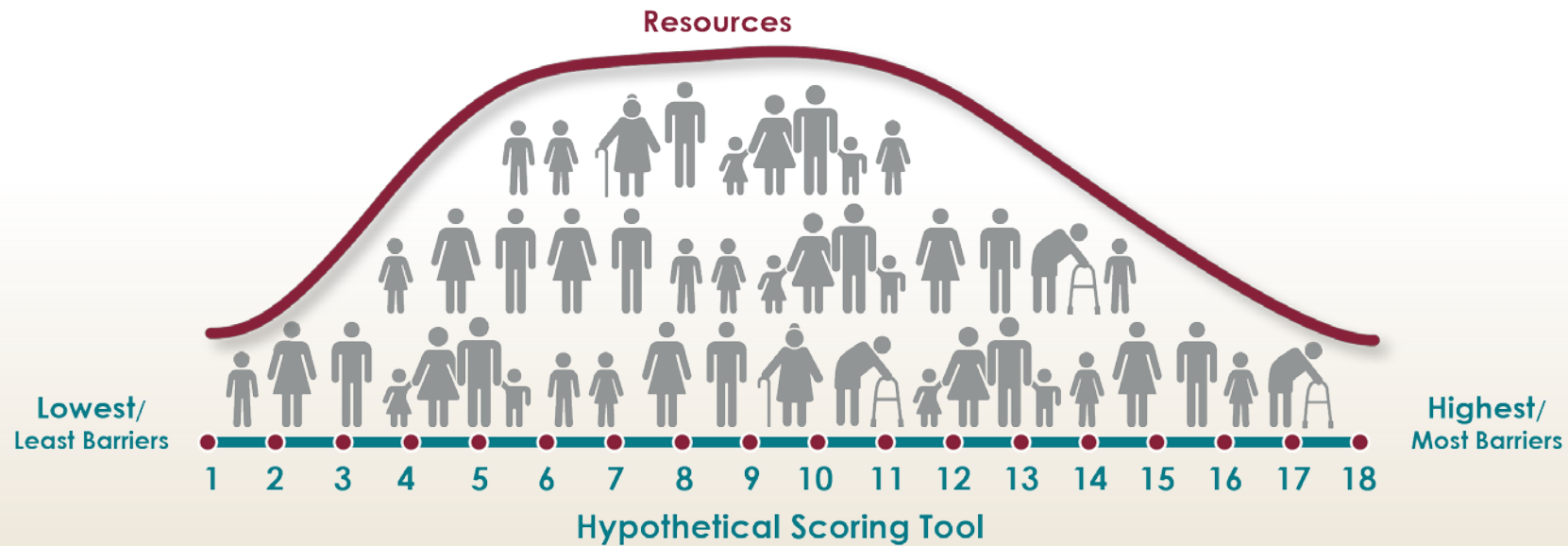**Dynamic System Management** ensures more efficiency:
- ✓ All available resources are prioritized to serve the highest need persons first; and
- ✓ Highest need individuals wait no longer than 60 days for permanent housing placement and support services.
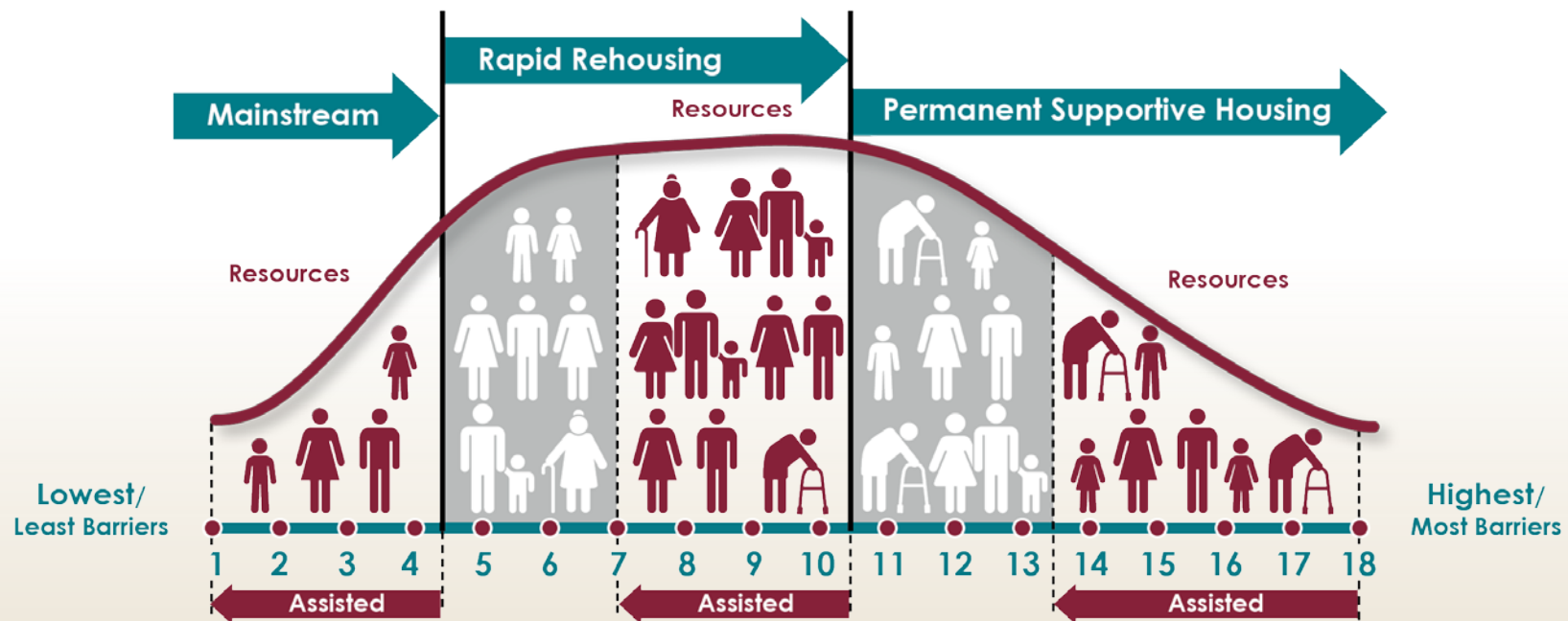
What is Static Prioritization?

In a static prioritization process:

- scores from one set of information are used, often gathered once, to place on a waitlist for a specific intervention type
- the order in which someone is selected for a vacancy is static once on the list and typically doesn't change
- actual availability of resources are not considered; people are referred to a waitlist for the intervention type indicated from the assessment tool score
- Results in long waitlists, with lower need households being served first in certain resource types

Sample of Static Prioritization with Scores

Resources

Lowest/
Least Barriers

Highest/
Most Barriers

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

Hypothetical Scoring Tool

Hypothetical Scoring Tool

Core Elements of Coordinated Entry

ACCESS

ASSESSMENT

PRIORITIZATION

REFERRAL

# ACCESS TIME OUT: *What's Not Working Well?*

What are common challenges with CE Access?

- Access Points not accessible (eligibility, location, target population, technology)
- Persons not using designated Access Points
- Non-Access Point agencies continue to function as "front door"
- Too many persons seeking assistance
- Access Point staff not trained appropriate, lack necessary intake skills
- Access Points not conducting problem solving or rapid resolution conversations
- Access Point operational guidance not established, not clear, not followed
- Unclear workflows; lack of defined process creates confusion
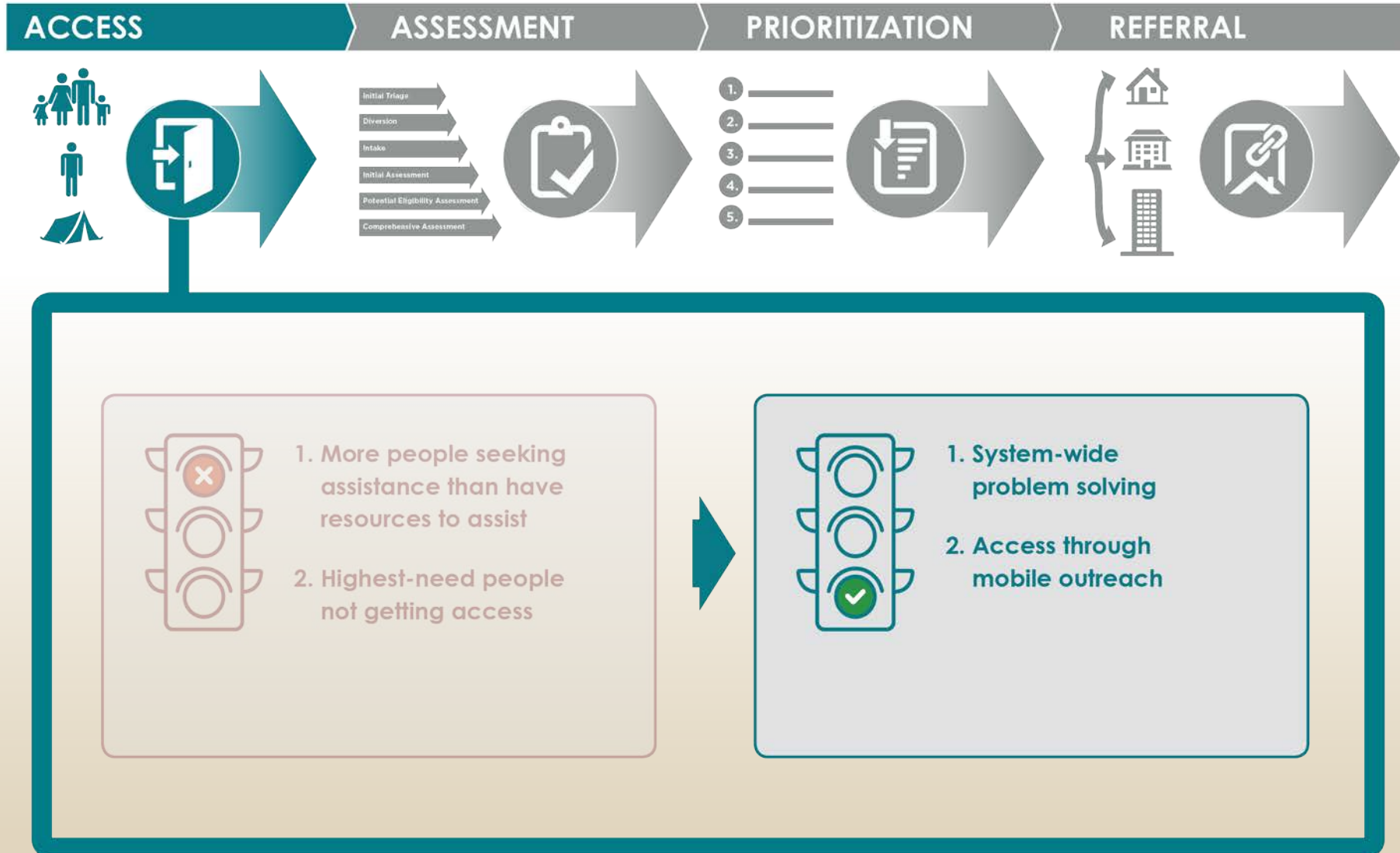
Common Access Challenges
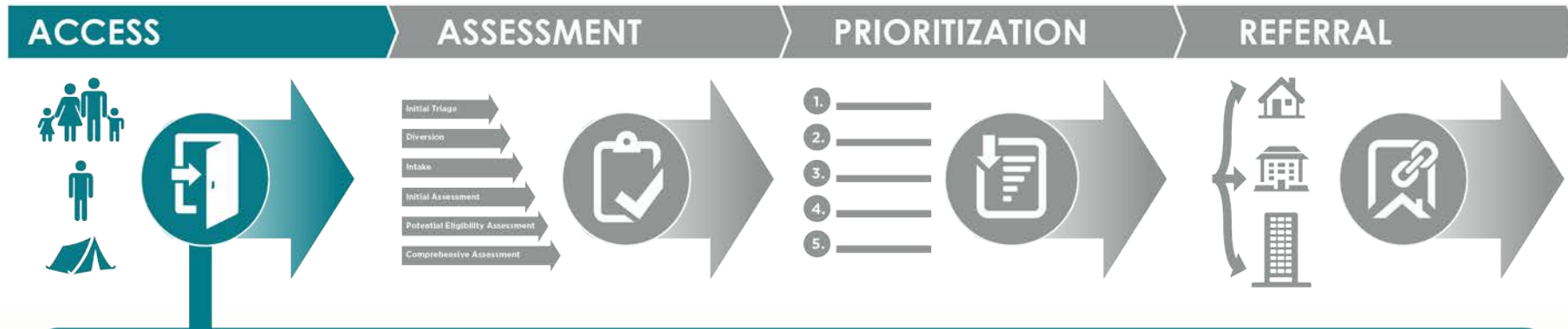
Strategies to Improve Access

ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT TIME OUT: *What's Not Working Well?*

What are common challenges with CE Assessment?

- Assessment process is too long
- Assessment doesn't support active listening, client-centered empowerment
- Assessment doesn't capture the necessary information to support quick, housing-focused resolution
- Problem-solving conversations not part of the defined CE Assessment process
- Assessment staff not trained appropriately, lack necessary assessment skills
- Assessment operational guidance not established, not clear, not followed
- Others?

Common Assessment Challenges

ACCESS → ASSESSMENT → PRIORITIZATION → REFERRAL

Initial Triage
Diversion
Intake
Initial Assessment
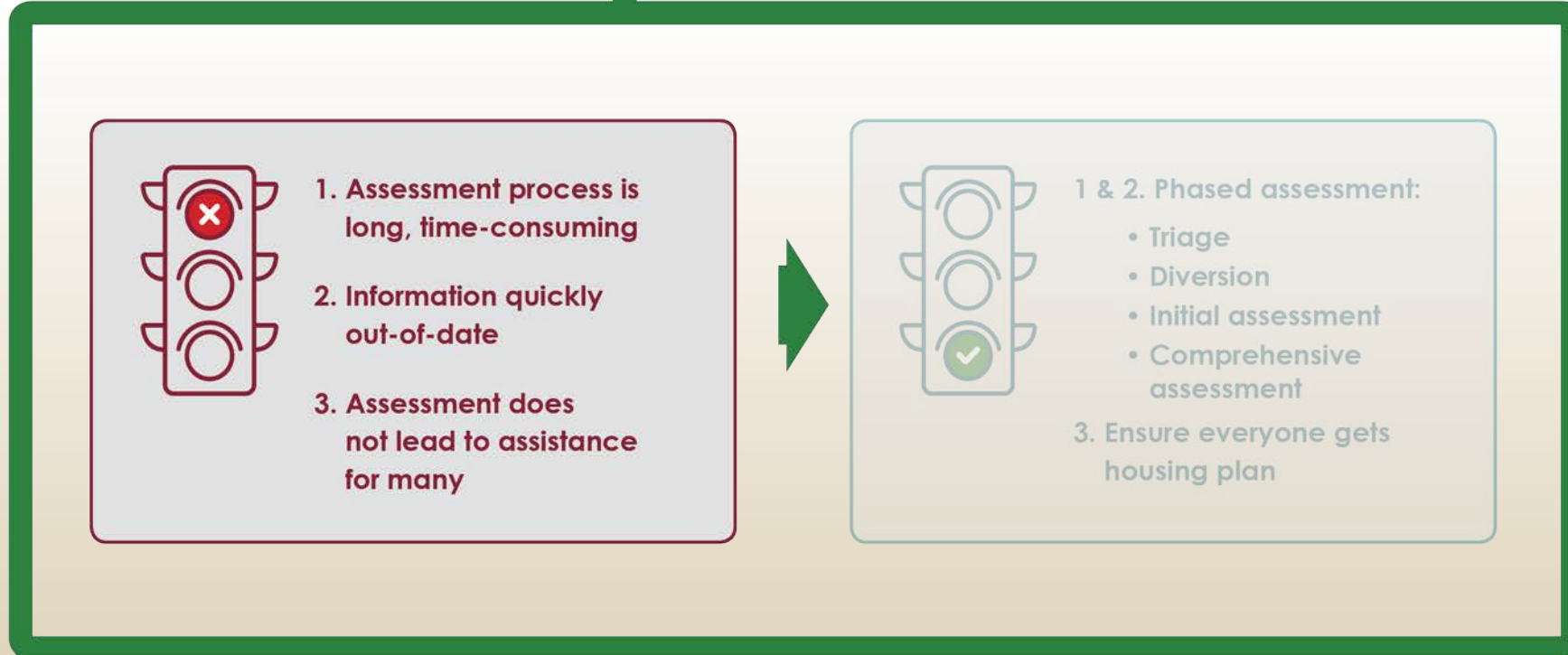Potential Eligibility Assessment
Comprehensive Assessment

1. Assessment process is long, time-consuming

2. Information quickly out-of-date

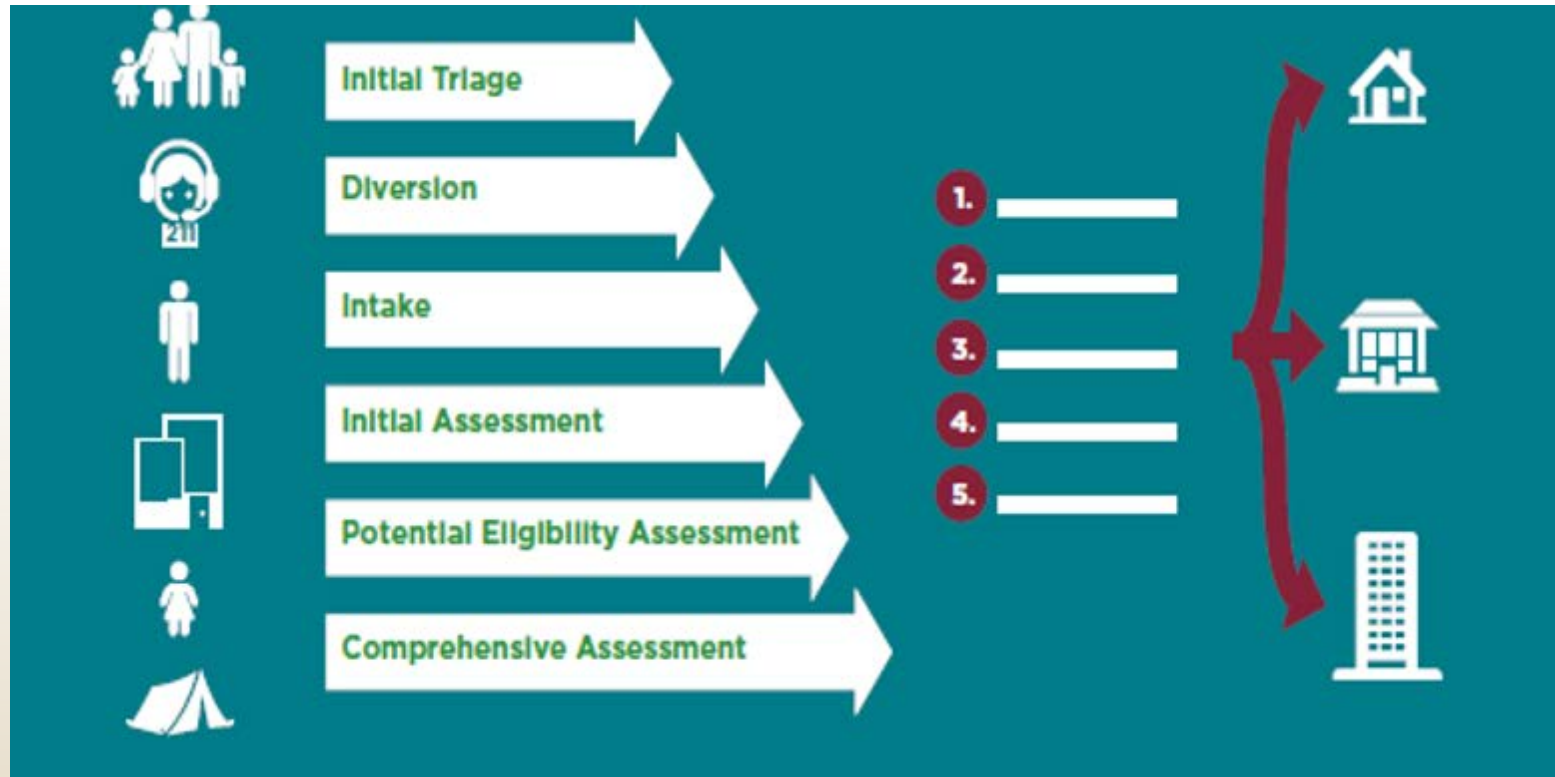3. Assessment does not lead to assistance for many

1 & 2. Phased assessment:
- Triage
- Diversion
- Initial assessment
- Comprehensive assessment

3. Ensure everyone gets housing plan

Strategies to Improve Assessment

Phased Assessment

What about assessment tools?

- Screening is different than assessment; screening is more about sorting
- Assessment tools are helpful to capture consistent information about clients; they should not dictate prioritization
- Assessment tools help identify housing and service needs – the score they generate should inform understanding a person's severity of need, but other factors should be considered
- There are no "federally-endorsed" assessment tools and all should be used with caution to make sure they meet the characteristics defined by VA and HUD
- Locally specific processes and tools may be used to reflect local conditions; tools and processes should be tested and assessed for reliability

Let's take a quick

BREAK

Defining Prioritization

Prioritization = person's needs and level of vulnerability are documented and quantified *in relation to other people who are also seeking homeless assistance.*

✓ Uses information learned from assessment
✓ Manages the inventory of housing resources
✓ Ensures persons with the greatest need and vulnerability receive priority or accelerated access to the supports they need to resolve their housing crisis.

Understanding Prioritization

Prioritization is NOT a tool. It is a policy.

- The community decides which set of criteria to use for determining which households have priority access to homeless system resources
- Once a prioritization policy is decided, then the community should design or pick tool(s) to operationalize that policy

HUD Prioritization Policy for PSH

1. Chronically homeless persons with longest period of homelessness and greatest severity of service needs
2. Homeless persons with a disability, longest periods of homelessness, greatest severity of service needs
3. Homeless persons with a disability and greatest severity of service needs
4. Homeless persons with a disability without severe service needs
5. Homeless persons with a disability coming from TH

Equality vs. Equity: What's fair?
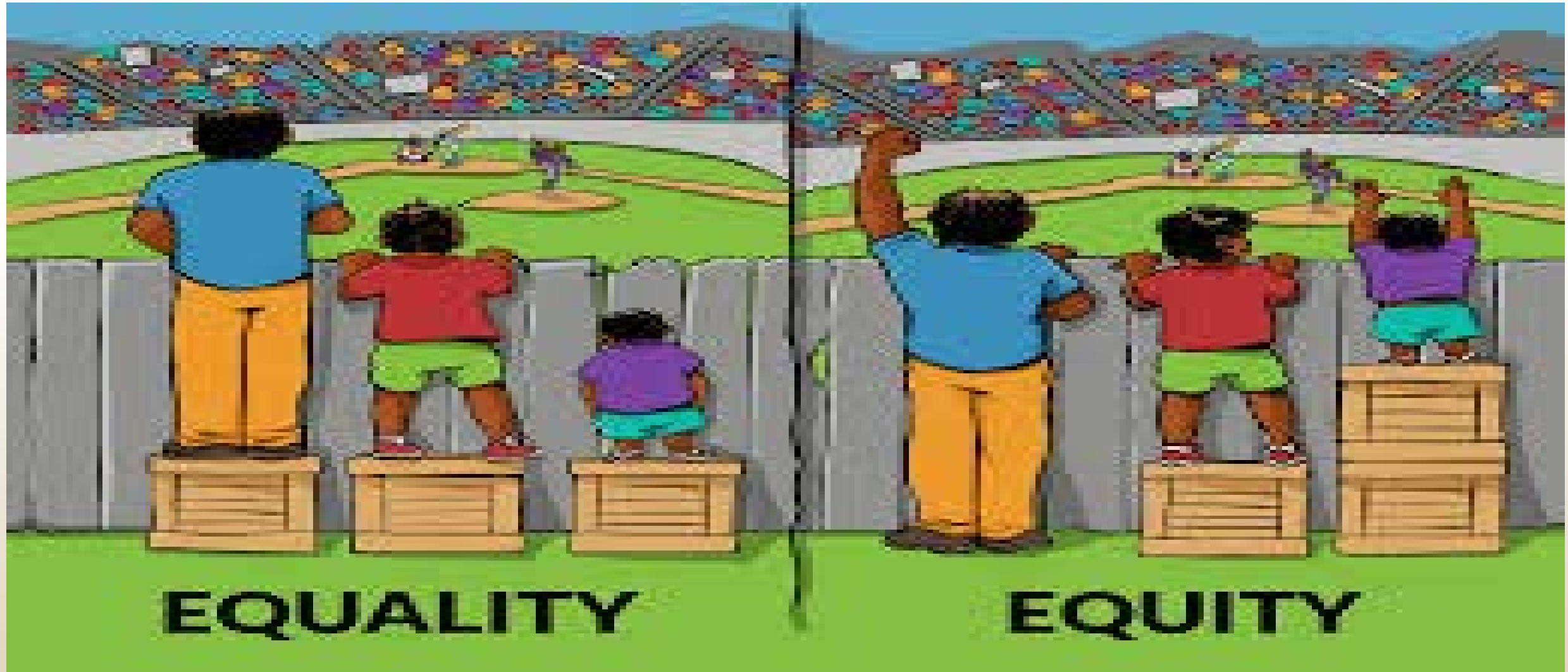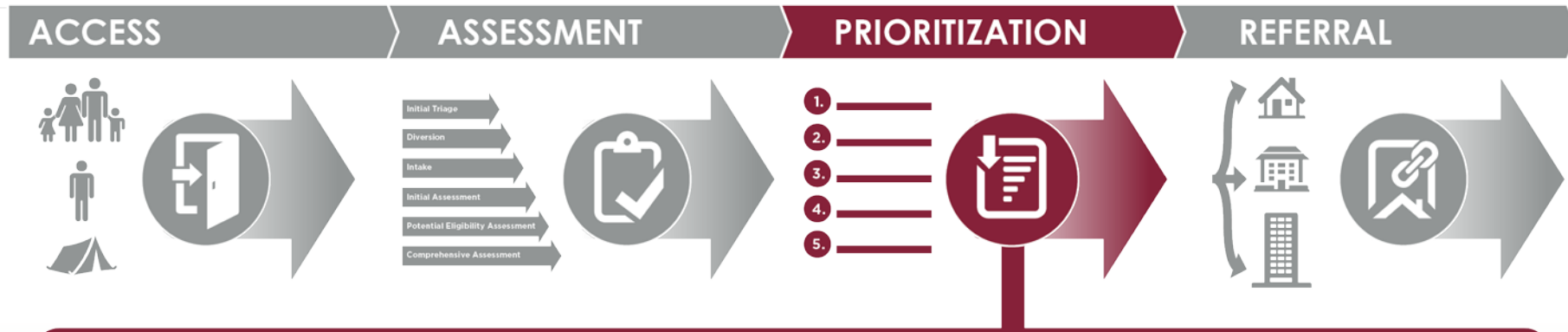
Prioritization Criteria

- A community may adopt different prioritization criteria for different groups – families, single adults, youth, survivors of DV, persons seeking homelessness prevention services.

- Examples:
  - ✓ A community may have few unsheltered families, so being unsheltered would not be most useful criteria to prioritize this population
  - ✓ Using time of current homeless episode homeless might be more relevant for single adults; a more appropriate criterion for families may be the number of past shelter stays

Prioritization and Scored Assessment Tools

- It is also important to remember that prioritization **<u>cannot</u>** be based exclusively on a specific disability type
- If an assessment tool consistently provides a higher score to persons with *specific* disabilities over other disabilities and prioritization is based exclusively on that score, this could violate fair housing statutes and regulations

Common Prioritization Challenges

ACCESS → ASSESSMENT → **PRIORITIZATION** → REFERRAL

Initial Triage
Diversion
Intake
Initial Assessment
Potential Eligibility Assessment
Comprehensive Assessment

1. **List is static** (conditions change, but list stays the same)

2. **Stakeholders lack confidence in score/order**

3. **List is long** (many people get nothing; list is out -of- date and then can't find high-priority people)

1. **Dynamic prioritization** (continuous adjustment of list)

2. **Case conferencing, other information used besides score**

Result of Dynamic Prioritization

Hypothetical Scoring Tool
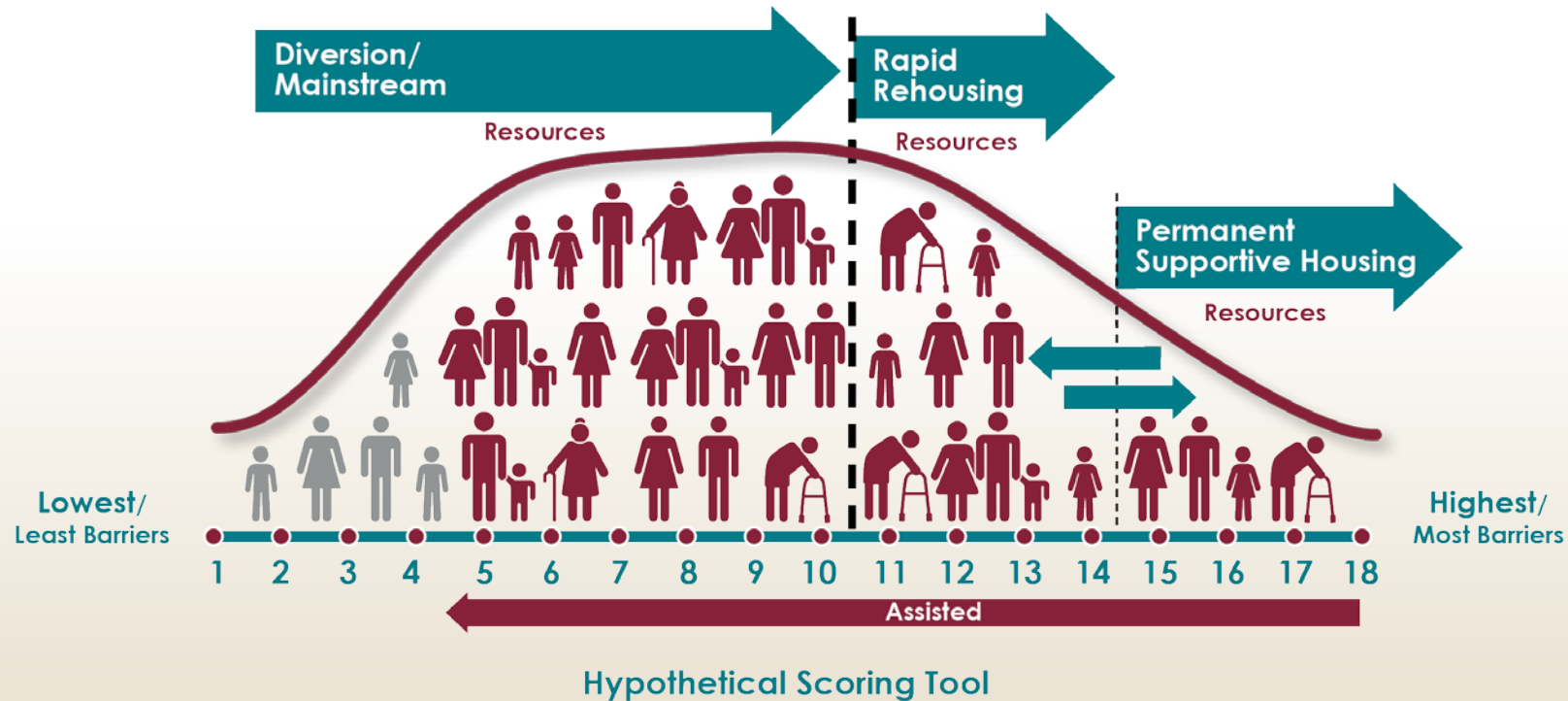
What about those who are not prioritized?

- Dynamic prioritization should not mean that those who are not prioritized for referral are simply ignored
- Households not prioritized for a system intervention should be offered problem-solving, diversion, help with self-resolution and referrals and supports to use mainstream services
- If circumstances change, people should be reassessed or new information should be added to a profile so they are reconsidered

Case Conferencing
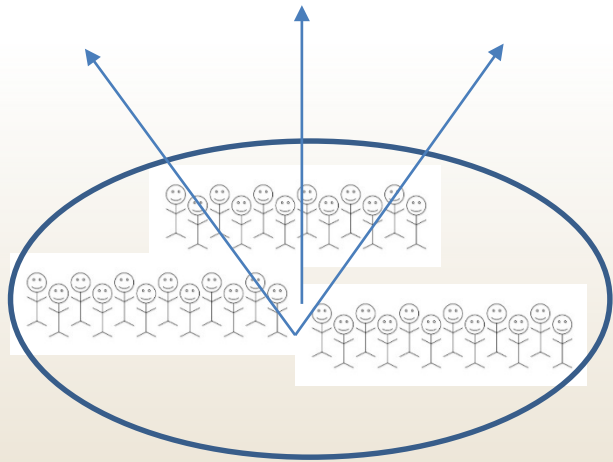
Prioritized Group

Use case conferencing to discuss:

- What is vacant?

- Who is 'ready'? (Locatable, has documents)

- Of those 'ready', who is highest need <u>and</u> eligible for vacancy?

- If multiple openings, make best referrals possible considering needs and client choice

- Bring in new or additional information or updated information to be current

- Follow up on what happened to last set of referrals

Scores and Prioritization

Core Take Home Message!

- A person's background, history and characteristics are not necessarily predictive of whether they will be successful in a specific intervention
- Prioritization is about deciding as a community how to best use the resources available
  - Not "they are a #, so they get X intervention" or "they got a # so they *need* X intervention to be successful".
  - Ask: "What is the best use of each of the currently *available* interventions? What is the best way to provide assistance to as many highest needs persons *right now*?"
- Case conferencing can help these conversations, while remaining focused on the highest need persons

Case conferences also offer an opportunity to:

- Make adjustments when a CoC has defined a prioritization criterion [e.g. Length of Time Homeless (LOTH)], but that criterion is not known for all participants
- Reconcile HMIS-based documentation or other sources against client self-report which may be less reliable
  - Rules about how these discrepancies are handled are part of the framework for what comes into the case conference conversation

Sizing the Priority List or Pool to the Inventory

- In a **dynamic** process, there is a clear policy that persons that meet the prioritization criteria (based on consistent factors, such as that they are unsheltered, have longest time homeless, are most vulnerable) become a part of a prioritized pool or group
- The pool is sized to make sure that the number of people prioritized roughly matches the availability of openings in a given time frame (e.g. 60 days)
- As openings arise, people are referred from the pool to vacancies using a dynamic process.

Result of Dynamic Prioritization

Hypothetical Scoring Tool

Hypothetical Scoring Tool
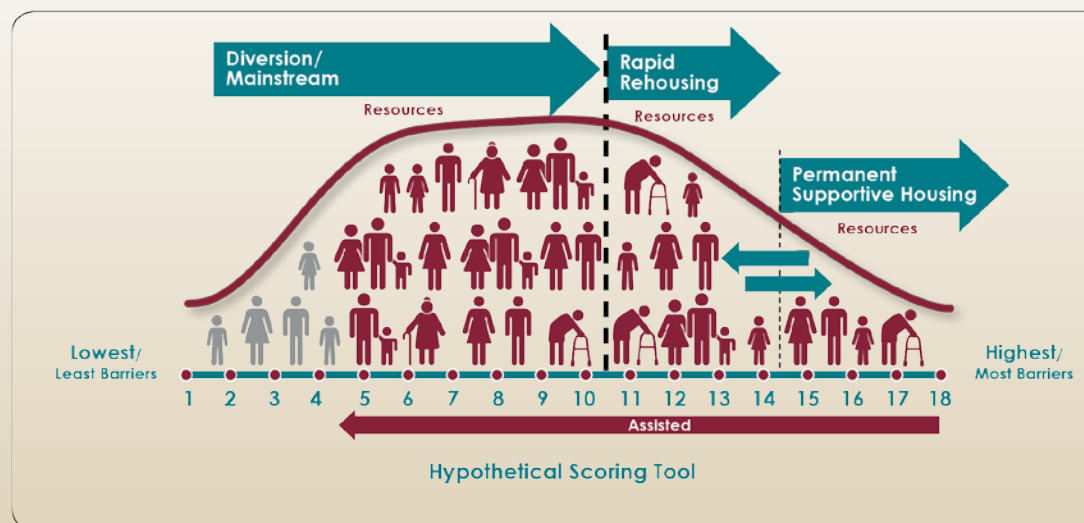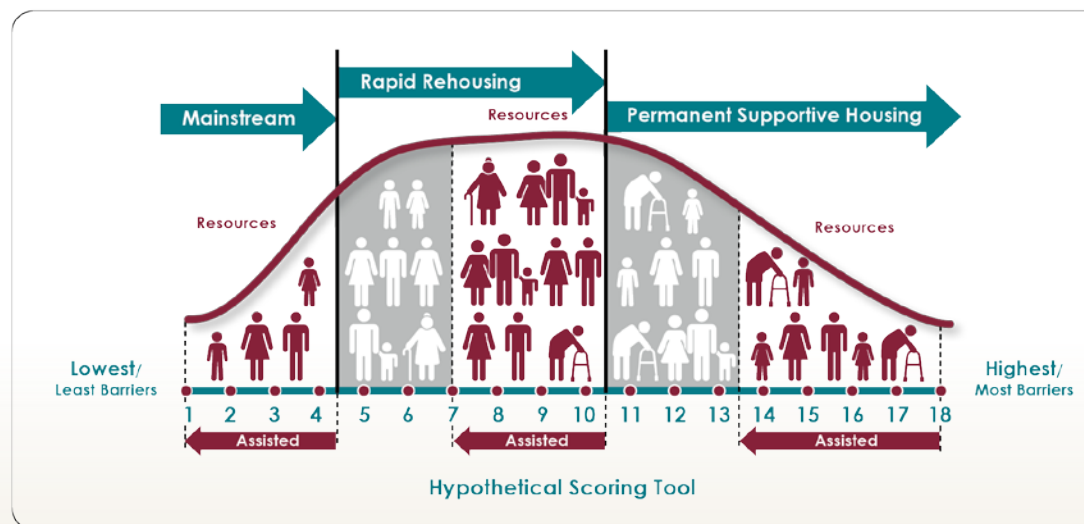
Using the information for system design

- A benefit of dynamic system management: it can be used to inform efforts to size the need for intervention types
  - How much more RRH is needed?
  - What types of PSH?
  - How much problem solving/diversion?
- Static systems can appear to indicate what is needed, but are likely to overestimate the lack of certain resources, based on the assigned score being considered to be the same as a proven need for a given intervention

What about By-Name Lists?

A By-Name List (BNL) is often part of a prioritization system

- It is intended to create a list of _all_ people in the community who meet certain criteria
  - Often, it assigns them a score or order, and often that order is "static"
  - They may stay on the list until they are housed or disappear

REFERRAL

Prioritization and Eligibility Criteria

- Prioritization and eligibility are not the same
- Eligibility also matters for referral purposes
- Programs for specific populations must admit only those who qualify for their program
- BUT this is different from making those characteristics a criterion used to prioritize

General rules of practice for *PSH*:

- People who are Chronically Homeless & have highest vulnerability generally should be offered PSH *when it is available*

- We know from research that PSH is most effective and cost effective when used to serve CH households who have been homeless the longest and/or have significant service needs

General rules of practice for **RRH**:

- Reality = more people experiencing CH than there are PSH vacancies

- Consider Rapid Rehousing (RRH) or other program models as an alternative, bridge or flexible support

  - ✓ RRH programs will need to be **flexible** to work well with a higher need population

  - ✓ People in RRH **can retain their eligibility** for PSH and may be referred to PSH after an attempt at RRH

  - ✓ May need to **adjust the RRH service model** to accommodate higher vulnerability participants. Monitor returns to homelessness from RRH projects to determine if the assistance needs to be adjusted.

Using Dynamic Prioritization for Referral

- Dynamic prioritization works in real time based on available resources
- If the only currently available resource is Rapid Rehousing for single adults, consider referring the highest need eligible person to that resource
- If that household is not ready or interested, or the program is not the best option available to them, move on to the next person
- It is critical to go to the people at the top of the list each time there is an opening, so highest need people are not passed over

Common Referral Challenges

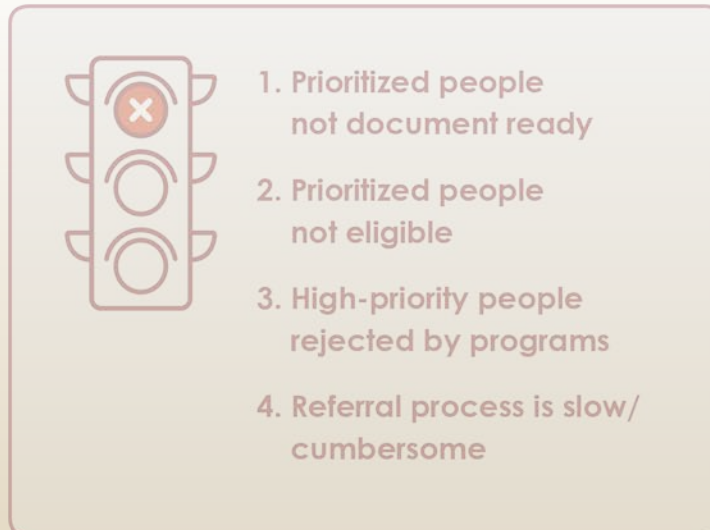ACCESS → ASSESSMENT → PRIORITIZATION → REFERRAL

Challenges:
1. Prioritized people not document ready
2. Prioritized people not eligible
3. High-priority people rejected by programs
4. Referral process is slow/cumbersome

Solutions:
1. Use navigators for highest priority
2. Ensure using eligibility information with priority
3. Reduce program entry barriers/screening
4. Include response times in performance measures

Strategies to Improve Referrals

Navigation:
- help to secure the documentation the participant will need for program enrollment, and
- help to access services that will be needed prior to housing, including applying for benefits, transportation support, and other immediate services.
- Ensure someone remains in touch with priority persons

- Navigation services may be provided by outreach workers, CES assessors, dedicated case managers or others connected to the CES.

Eligibility

- Programs receiving the referrals have final responsibility for ensuring the people they admit are eligible
- Coordinated Entry should seek to minimize referrals that do not meet required eligibility criteria
- Goal should be to make successful referrals quickly and have them accepted quickly

Building in Accountability and Quality Assurance

What happens to high need people

- Do they get admitted into openings?
- How many are skipped
- How many are rejected
- How many are lost before getting housed?

Track time frames

- from prioritization to referral
- From referral to approval or denial

Reasons for denials or refusals by clients

- Set targets and review progress

Strategies for Effective System Management

1. All or most resources are included in the Coordinated entry system
2. CE Processes are effectively management and Documented
3. Data and feedback are used to evaluate effectiveness and support continuous improvement
4. All stakeholders receive clear messaging about the system and its purpose

Applying dynamic system management concepts…

Review the handout – *Dynamic System Management Essential Elements*

1. Which essential strategies are in place currently in your CoC? Are they working? Do they need refinement?

2. Which are most feasible to implement in the next few months?

3. Which are attractive but not feasible? What does your CoC need to do in order to implement them?